INDEPENDENT MULTIDISCIPLINARY SCIENCE TEAM (IMST)

State of Oregon

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Kay Brown
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
2501 SW First Avenue
Portland, OR 97207

Dear Kay,

At the request of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), the Independent Multidisciplinary Science Team (IMST) reviewed the "Coastal Conservation Research Hatchery Project Proposal Narrative". In general, the Team endorses the concept of conservation hatcheries where they are carefully designed as experiments to restore naturally spawning populations. However, we find that this proposal is rather vague and lacks specific scientific objectives or hypotheses.

IMST is also concerned about the proposed location of the project at the closed Fall Creek Hatchery in the Alsea basin. With the closure of this facility no coho have been released since 1998 into the basin. This creates an excellent opportunity to study recovery of wild salmonids and natural recolonization rates. With increased ocean survival in recent years and increasing numbers of spawners in the basin, natural recolonization may be sufficient to fully seed spawning habitats in the basin. Reopening the Fall Creek Hatchery and releasing hatchery reared fish into the system will compromise this experiment to assess recovery within the Alsea basin.

We noted in our report on artificial propagation[1] the important role that research and conservation hatcheries can play in accomplishing the goals of the Oregon Plan. With this specific proposal we feel that the project should be driven primarily by the research opportunities it presents (both new questions and limited disruption of others). We are concerned that the proposal to use Fall Creek may be overly influenced by the availability of an existing facility, even though substantive modification would be required to make it operational as a research and conservation hatchery facility.

We encourage ODFW to re-examine other facilities where a conservation hatchery has greater potential to replace coho released for production with sustainable populations of naturally spawning fish.

Sincerely,

Logan A. Norris
Chair, Independent Multidisciplinary Science Team

cc: Geoff Huntington
IMST

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[1] Independent Multidisciplinary Science Team (IMST). 2001. The scientific basis for artificial propagation in the recovery of wild anadromous salmonids in Oregon. Technical Report 2001-1 to the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds. Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. Salem, Oregon.